

ANS Correspondence

Blackstone Memorial Library  
[Branford CT]

[Attn: Charles N. Baxter]

1922

I think it might  
be well to make  
folder for  
The Blackstone  
Mem Lib.

What say you?

Cross reference

Mr Baxter,

NEW YORK

BROADWAY, BETWEEN 155TH AND 156TH STREETS

THE AMERICAN NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

Library



# THE BLACKSTONE MEMORIAL LIBRARY

BRANFORD, CONNECTICUT

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The Blackstone Memorial Library was founded by Timothy B. Blackstone, in memory of his father, James Blackstone. James Blackstone was born in Branford in 1793. He was a descendant in the fifth generation from the Rev. William Blackstone, the first settler of Boston. He was a farmer and lived on the farm about two miles east of the center of Branford, on the Pine Orchard road, where his ancestors for four generations had lived before him. He was a prominent citizen of the town. He died in Branford, February 4, 1886, at the age of ninety-three.

Timothy B. Blackstone was born in Branford, March 28, 1829. He became a civil engineer. In 1847, at the age of 18, he began his life work in railroad service as a rodman on the survey for the New York and New Haven Railroad. Later he was an assistant engineer in the construction of the Stockbridge and Pittsfield Railroad and of the Vermont Valley Railroad. In 1851, he went to Illinois and was a division engineer in the construction of the Illinois Central Railroad. From 1856 to 1861, he was the chief engineer for the Joliet and Chicago Railroad, and from 1861 to 1864, the president. In 1864, at the age of 35, he was made president of the Chicago and Alton Railroad. For thirty-five years, until his resignation in 1899, he ably managed the affairs of this railroad. He died in Chicago, May 26, 1900.

In 1890, several residents were endeavoring to establish a public library in Branford. They solicited gifts from successful business men in other communities, who were natives of the

town. Mr. Blackstone was one of those to whom they wrote. He welcomed this opportunity to do a great public service for his birth-place, and offered to bear the whole expense of erecting a library building. When the plan was further discussed, he also decided to endow the library. For three years the project was under consideration and plans were made. In accordance with Mr. Blackstone's wishes a special charter was obtained from the Connecticut Legislature vesting the control of the library in a self-perpetuating board of trustees, consisting of six residents of Branford, and the librarian of Yale University. The act of incorporation of the James Blackstone Memorial Library Association was approved by the governor, March 23, 1893. The original incorporators were Thorvald F. Hammer, Edward F. Jones, Dr. Charles W. Gaylord, Edmund Zacher, William Regan and Henry W. Hubbard. The librarian of Yale University at that time was Addison Van Name. The present trustees are Edmund Zacher, President, Edwin R. Kelsey, Secretary, Alfred E. Hammer, Treasurer, Walter N. Boynton, Edward E. Regan and Andrew Keogh, librarian at Yale.

The architect, Solon S. Beman of Chicago, in making the plans for the building, chose the Ionic style of architecture. The details, particularly the Ionic columns in the portico, the marble doorways, and the egg and dart molding, which is in evidence everywhere, in marble, bronze, wood and plaster, are taken from the Erechtheum, on the Acropolis at Athens. The Erechtheum, a temple dedicated to the worship of Athena, the patron goddess of Athens, and also of Erechtheus, one of the early kings, was built in the golden age of Greek art, the time of Pericles. All authorities are agreed that it is the most beautiful example of Ionic architecture. Professor Howard C. Butler of Princeton University, in his "Story of Athens", describes it as a "temple of marvelous beauty, the wonder of the age, and the delight of succeeding generations."

The white marble used for the exterior of the building came from eastern Tennessee and is unusually hard and durable. The pink and grey marble used in the interior also came from Tennessee. The building is fire-proof. Its outside dimensions are 162 by 129 feet. It faces the south. The bronze front doors weigh almost a ton.

Upon entering the building and passing through a marble vestibule, one comes directly into the octagonal rotunda, the central feature of the building. This rounda is 44 feet in diameter. Its walls, piers, arches, and entablature are entirely of polished marble. In the center of the rotunda, directly beneath the dome, is a bust of Timothy B. Blackstone. This was a gift from his nephew, William N. Blackstone of Norwich. The sculptor was Oliver D. Grover of Chicago. From the rotunda radiate the following six rooms: on the right, the reading room with a small reference room on each side of it, and on the left, the book room, with a small children's room at the left, and the librarian's office at the right. Directly opposite the entrance is a doorway opening into a hall from which a stairway leads to the upper story. The lecture hall also opens upon this hall, to which there is an outside entrance.

The mural decorations of the dome were made by Mr. Grover. The eight paintings represent the evolution of bookmaking. Their titles are: 1. Gathering the Papyrus; 2. Records of the Pharoahs; 3. Stories from the Iliad; 4. Mediaeval Illumination; 5. Venetian Copperplate Printing; 6. First Proof of Gutenberg Bible; 7. The Franklin Press, and 8. A Book Bindery—1895. Mr. Grover also painted the medallion portraits of Bryant, Emerson, Hawthorne, Longfellow, Whittier, Holmes, Lowell, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, that are placed in the marble spandrels between the arches. The height of the dome from the floor is 50 feet.

The portrait of James Blackstone, which hangs over the fireplace in the reading room,

and the portrait of Timothy B. Blackstone, which is in the reference room, were both painted by J. Colin Forbes of Toronto.

The walls and ceiling of the staircase hall are finished in polished marble. The stairs to the second story and basement are of solid marble and built self-supporting on the arch principle.

The lecture hall is 50 feet long and 40 feet wide. It is finished in antique oak. Its seating capacity is 325.

Building operations were begun in 1893, and the building was completed in 1896. It is supposed to have cost about \$300,000. Mr. Blackstone also provided an endowment fund of \$300,000.

The library was dedicated on June 17, 1896. The next day it was opened for use with a stock of 6,000 books. It now contains 39,018 volumes. The net addition of books during the last year was 545, and the circulation was 72,556. The library has a branch at Stony Creek and deposit stations in schools. The number of cardholders is now 2,735. Temporary residents may use the library by making a deposit of \$3.00. About 100 periodicals are taken for the reading room. The library hours are 8:30 a. m. to 9 p. m. every day except Sunday.

The first librarian was Arthur W. Tyler. He resigned in 1898. The second librarian was Henry W. Whitney. He was appointed in 1899 and served until his death in 1911. He was succeeded in 1912 by Charles N. Baxter.

The library has for sale copies of the "Exercises at the Opening of the James Blackstone Memorial Library, June 17, 1896," containing the addresses delivered at the dedication, with several illustrations of the building. Post card photographs are also on sale at the delivery desk.

August, 1921.



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# POST CARD

CORRESPONDENCE

ADDRESS

△ A Z O △  
A PLACE A  
Z STAMP Z  
O HERE O  
▽ A Z O ▽



JUN-8 1922

The James Blackstone Memorial Library  
Branford Connecticut

Charles N. Baxter Librarian

Dear Mr. Grard

A man in town  
has the following paper currency  
~~which~~ and he wants to know if it  
is worth anything:

Continental Currency—Three Dollars  
Printed by Hall & Sellers, Philadelphia 1776  
Resolution of Congress Feb 17, 1776  
signed by G. B. Smith

---

3d No 18766  
General Assembly  
at Hartford  
Oct 11, 1777  
three Pence

4d no 24482

Mr. Jones

general assembly  
Hartford

Oct 11, 1777

signed by E. Brown

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Fractional Currency

Act of March 3 1863

one 50¢ series of 1875

two 25¢ pieces, one much worn

one 3¢

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If you can give me any  
information about these, or  
direct me to anyone who can,  
I shall be very grateful.  
With best wishes

Sincerely yours

Charles F. Johnson

Yours truly

in R. Jones

June 9th, 1902.

Charles F. Dexter, Esq., Librarian,  
The James H. Henshaw Memorial Library,  
Brunford, Connecticut.

Dear Sir:-

Your letter about the paper currency  
of the Revolutionary period has been referred  
to me by Mr. Goddard.

Its scientific value is perhaps best  
expressed by the phrase "Not worth a Continental".  
Planned in every essential the well  
kept fifty seems to a dollar, but values they  
are well preserved so unless they bear the  
names of some prominent in Revolutionary his-  
tory they seldom have any considerable value.

The fractional currency of 75 is  
worth its face value, and it may and may a  
slight premium above that.

If this does not give you the infor-  
mation you desire, I should be glad to have  
you ask further questions.

Very truly yours,

Secretary.



The James Blackstone Memorial Library  
Branford Connecticut

Charles N. Baxter Librarian

Sydney P. Roe, Esq  
Secretary, American Numismatic Society

Dear Sir, I thank you very much  
indeed for your letter in regard  
to the paper currency.

I will show it to the man  
who has the currency.

Yours very truly  
Charles N. Baxter

10 June 1922



The James Blackstone Memorial Library  
Branford Connecticut

Charles N. Baxter Librarian

Mr. Sydney Love.

New Bedford

Dear Sir, Can you give me the  
names of a reliable dealer in  
guns and paper currency? The  
gentleman, in whose behalf I wrote  
some time ago to Mr. Graham, would  
sell the paper currency to me.  
I should be very grateful to you  
for this information.

Yours sincerely  
Charles N. Baxter

29 July 1922

July 29th, 1922.

Mr. Charles N. Baxter,  
The James Blackstone Memorial Library,  
Branford, Connecticut.

Dear Sir:-

Replying to your letter of the 29th, I think the dealers, who are apt to be interested in a collection such as you wrote about, are:-  
Rudolph Kohler, 70 Fifth Avenue, New York.  
The New York Coin & Stamp Company, 912 Sixth Avenue, New York.

Very truly yours,

Secretary.



The James Blackstone Memorial Library  
Branford Connecticut

Charles N. Baxter Librarian

Mr. Sydney P. Moe  
New York City.

Dear Sir, I thank you very much  
for the information in your  
letter of July 29.

Yours very truly  
Charles N. Baxter

3 August 1892



Baxter, Chas H.

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(from original folder)

(Beckstone Memorial Library)

Blackstone Mass. Library